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The 10th number of THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN will not be issued until the 21st of June, owing to the necessary absence of the Editor. Such an interruption may perhaps occur again; but we shall not consider the year completed until we have delivered 26 numbers.

THE TRUE MESSIAH EXALTED, OR JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD

(Continued from page 59)

I CAN find no examples in the scriptures, of worship being paid to the Spirit as a person. We are commanded to worship the Father, and Son; but no where in the scriptures are we commanded to worship the Spirit as a person. The heavenly worshippers sung glory to God and the Lamb; but no mention is made that they sung glory to the Spirit.—John mentions the throne of God and the throne of Christ; but no mention is made of the throne of the Spirit. Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God; but mentions nothing of seeing a third person. The Spirit of God, and the Holy Ghost, mean one and the same thing: and I see no more reason to believe the Holy Ghost is a person, than that the seven spirits of God mentioned in Rev. iv. 5, are seven persons. Add these seven to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and you will make ten persons instead of three. But, sir, instead of the Holy Ghost being a distinct person, it is represented in the scriptures as the Spirit of a person. But brevity forbids me to enlarge here.

The principal passage brought from scriptures, to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, is that found in 1 John, v. 7. "For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." I need not inform you that the genuineness of this text has been denied by some, and doubted by many. However, as I find nothing in it difficult to reconcile my ideas with, I do not wish to avail myself of this opportunity to get rid of the passage. You will, however, remember that the apostle does not say there are three persons that bear record; and surely we ought to be cautious not to affirm more than he does. In the very next verse it is added, "And there are

three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." Bearing witness, and bearing record, must mean the same thing. The last three bear witness as well as the first three; but no one can suppose that *water* and *blood* are persons. It may be asked how then did they bear witness? I answer, in the same manner that Christ's works bore witness of himself, that he was the Son of God, and sent of the Father. "The works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

Of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, John says, "these three are one." But it is not said that these three are one God; nor is any such idea suggested. How then are they *one*? I answer, they are *one*, as any three persons or things are *one*, which unite in bearing testimony to the same truth. They are *one*, in their record: and John immediately adds, "this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son."

This passage may be understood in a similar sense to that found in John x. 30. "I and my Father are one." Trinitarians agree from this passage that Christ and his Father are one and the same being; but if we compare this with other passages where the word *one* is used in a similar sense, we shall find that no such inference can reasonably be drawn from it. The word *one* fits various uses in the scriptures. Paul tells his Corinthian brethren, "He that planteth and he that watereth are *one*;" (1 Cor. iii. 8.) but in a few verses preceding this, he had told them "I have planted, Apollos watered." Here Paul and Apollos are said to be *one*; yet Paul and Apollos are two distinct persons. Again, of the church, Paul says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ: There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all *one* in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 27, 28.) Here all believers in Christ are said to be *one*; yet not one person, nor one being. In Christ's prayer to his Father, in the 17th chapter of John, speaking of his disciples he says, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given

them, that they may be *one* even as we are *one*." *Even* means just so; hence Christ prayed that his disciples might be *one*, *even* or just as he and his Father are *one*. But admitting the hypothesis that Christ and his Father are but *one* being, if his prayer is ever answered, his disciples must become *one* being. But, sir, such an idea is too absurd for reception. That *oneness* represents the union that exists between the Father, and the Son, which ought to, must, and will yet exist between all Christ's true disciples. The Lord hasten that happy day.

Mr. Jones, (in the work you favored me with the perusal of,) labors hard to support the *Trinity* from passages in Genesis, which speak of a plurality of persons. He says, "the word *God*, though of the singular number, is of plural comprehension."* If we search the scriptures candidly, instead of persons in the plural number being applied to God, we shall find that God is spoken of as one person only. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his [God's] PERSON." [Heb. i. 3] You will also find that pronouns are applied to him, in the singular number, hundreds of times in the scriptures. It is also certain, that when God is addressed or prayed to in the scriptures, he is always addressed as one person only. David said, "O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shew *THYSELF*,"—not yourselves.—"Lift up *thyself*, thou Judge of the earth." Christ addressed his Father in these words, "And this is life eternal, that they might know *THEE*, *THE ONLY TRUE GOD*, and Jesus Christ whom *thou* has sent."

If God be a plurality of persons, ought he not to be addressed in the plural?—Ought not christians in their prayers, instead of using the following pronouns, *THEE*, *THOU*, *THINE* and *THYSELF*, to use *YE*, *YOUR*, *YOU*, and *YOURSELVES*? Certainly they ought, to make the Trinitarian system consistent with itself. This, however, would be very unscriptural and improper. I find no scriptures which satisfy me that there is a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. Moses said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* Lord;" (Deut. vi. 4.) not *three* Lords nor *three* persons. God is said to be one person, and not three. I can find no scripture where the term persons is applied to God; nor can I find any thing in

* We refer our readers to the 5th and 6th numbers of this work, where we have examined this argument at some length.

the scriptures which contradicts that God is one person, and Jesus Christ another. If any thing is plain in the scriptures, it is that there is *one* God, and that God has a Son: or, in other words, that "there is *one* God, and one Mediator between God and men."

ON THE WORSHIP OF JESUS.

In consulting the Greek Testament, we find *five* words used to express the ideas we attach to the English word worship. These are, 1, Proskuneo; 2, Liturgeo; 3, Latreuo; 4, Sebomai; 5, Proseuchomai.

The first is used to express that civil respect which one man shows to another, and which is very different in the different countries and ages of the world; consequently, the application of this word, to denote the homage or respect shown to Jesus, cannot reasonably be adduced to authorize his worship.

In the Greek Old and New Testaments this word occurs in the following passages. Abraham worshiped the children of Heth, Gen. 23, 7, 12.—All the congregation of Israel worshiped David, 1 Chron. 29, 20.—King Nabuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshiped Daniel, Dan. 2, 46.—The leper worshiped Jesus, Matth. 8, 2.—The servant to whom his master gave ten thousand talents fell down and worshiped him, Matth. 18, 26.—The man cured of blindness worshiped Jesus, John 9, 38.—Cornelius worshiped Peter, Acts 10, 25.—God promises that the disobedient members of the church of Philadelphia, should worship the minister of that church, Rev. 3, 9.—And God commands the powers of nature to worship, or obey, Jesus, Heb. 1, 6.—From these texts it appears evident, that the word worship is chiefly used to express respect, and cannot be alledged to prove the religious adoration of any being to whom it may be applied. Let the advocates for the worship of Jesus show in what part of the scriptures any of those other words used to express that honor due to God alone, is applied to Christ, and then they will have at least some shadow of evidence for their doctrine, but at present they have none.

As Unitarians we cannot, we dare not, worship as God, him who would not allow himself to be called good without reproof; who himself often prayed to the Almighty for support and direction; and on his taking leave of his disciples plainly forbade them ever after to pray to him, or ask of him any

thing, John 16, 23, commanding them to address all prayer to his and their common God and father, who knew their wants, and needed no intercessor to prompt his infinite goodness to acts of benevolence and mercy.

Chr. Reflector.

THE APOSTOLICAL BENEDICTION.

2 Cor. xiii. 14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

This passage can be construed into a proof of the Trinity only by supposing that God, Christ, and the Spirit, being mentioned together, they must each of them be truly God; but the absurdity of this supposition has been shown already: or by taking for granted that the words are a prayer, equally addressed to God, Christ, and the Spirit, which is incapable of proof.

God is mentioned distinctly from Christ and the Spirit. If the two latter be divine persons included in God, the distinct mention of them is superfluous. If they be distinct from God, and God comprehends three persons, there must be three persons without Christ and the Holy Spirit. The distinct mention of Christ and the Spirit when the word God is used, proves that Christ is not God, and that the Spirit is not a divine person. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the favor of God which flows through him; the communion of the Holy Spirit, is the participation of divine gifts and powers.

Though the apostle uttered his benediction in a devout frame of mind, the words are not a prayer: they were addressed neither to God, nor Christ; nor the Spirit, but to the Corinthians. Even could they be proved a prayer, it would not follow that they were addressed to any being but God; for surely Paul might lift up his heart to God, on behalf of his fellow christians, for the grace which comes by Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the Spirit; as he does, Eph. iii. 14. in which place he says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" though his prayer related both to Christ and the Spirit.

Wright.

THE THREE HEAVENLY WITNESSES.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy

Spirit, and these three are one." 1 John v. 7. This passage is admitted by learned Trinitarians to be an interpolation, and they decline making use of it in support of their hypothesis. I shall first state the proof of its being an interpolation, which I quote from the note on the place in the Improved Version, and then show that if genuine, it would not prove the existence of three co-equal persons in one God.

"This text concerning the heavenly witnesses, is not contained in any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the fifteenth century. 2. Nor in any Latin manuscript, earlier than the ninth century. 3. It is not found in any of the ancient versions. 4. It is not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, though to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, they have cited the words both before and after this text. 5. It is not cited by any of the early Latin fathers, even when the subject on which they treat would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. 6. It is first cited by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the fifth century, and by him it is suspected to have been forged. 7. It has been omitted as spurious in many editions of the New Testament, since the reformation: in the two first of Erasmus, in those of Aldus, Colinaeus, Zwinglius, and lately of Griesbach. 8. It was omitted by Luther in his German version. In the old English bibles of Henry VIII. Edward VI. and Elizabeth, it was printed in small types, or included in brackets; but between the years 1566 and 1580, it began to be printed as it now stands; by whose authority it is not known." The evidence of its spuriousness is complete, and is admitted by the most learned Trinitarians of all denominations.

If genuine, this text would not prove the doctrine of the Trinity; for, 1. The word persons occurs not in it. 2. It says not these three are one in nature, or one in essence, or are one God, nor, these three are co-equal and co-eternal. 3. It only asserts the three are one in testimony, one in the record they bear. 4. A oneness in testimony by no means requires that the witnesses should be all persons of the same rank, and on a perfect equality with each other. 5. None but distinct beings can be distinct witnesses; if the three were all one being, and God is one being only, they could be but one witness.

ib.

THE USURPATION OF THE BISHOP OF ROME.

(Continued from page 62.)

ON a former occasion, we took a cursory notice of the exemptions plead for ecclesiasticks, from trials in ordinary judicial courts. The Church of Rome successfully prosecuted these claims to a most extravagant and pernicious length. "The clergy, the more effectually to exercise power over the laity, exempted themselves from all civil jurisdiction." "By degrees," says an ecclesiastical historian "the dignity of the priests rose so much higher than that of the temporal powers, that it was deemed a thing absolutely intolerable that a clergyman should be subject to any temporal tribunal; and as the common law did not punish with death, the clergy enjoyed almost an absolute impunity from the commission of any crime whatever.— And in those dark and ignorant ages, the disposition of the clergy to violence, and crimes of every nature, was little, if at all less than that of the laity. It appears in the reign of Henry III. of England, that more than a hundred murders had been committed by clergymen, whom the civil powers could not bring to justice. As to the higher ranks of the clergy, it was hardly possible that they should be punished for any crime, on account of their right of appeal to Rome, and the certainty of their finding protection there, especially if they had any difference with their sovereign. Besides, in these times, no clergyman could be punished capitally without previous degradation; and a priest could not be degraded but by eight bishops, to assemble whom was a great expense."

The Roman clergy, not satisfied with exempting themselves from trial before tribunals appointed by the civil government, brought within the ecclesiastical courts exclusively all causes relating to marriages, alimony, and wills; and in many instances encroached on the more common administration of justice.

Not merely in the administration of justice did the Roman pontiff invade the rights of civil government. In the year 606 the emperor Phocas, by a public decree, invested the Pope with the title of Universal Bishop, and clothed him with superior authority in all ecclesiastical concerns. Thus empowered, the servant became too mighty for the master. From this time the Pope claimed the right of nominating and investing bishops in all the

Churches in Europe, though the claim was not immediately allowed in every kingdom. He not only assumed a full domination in ecclesiastical affairs, but usurped the civil power, and often, by his mandate, established and removed kings. A Pope arrogantly declared to a sovereign potentate, "that the dignity of the Pope was as much superior to that of the Emperor, as the administration of the things of heaven is above that of the things of earth."

Another measure adopted to promote the scheme of Papal power and aggrandizement, was the prohibition of the marriage of priests. By this means the ties of country were loosened, and the tender bonds of domestick life were broken asunder through all orders of the priest-hood. The clergy were considered as married to the Church: with the Church their interests were identified; and as a body they were devoted to its purposes. Several orders of monks were established as distinct corps in this service. They depended on the Pope for their existence, derived their support from the revenues of the Church, and always were ready to obey, without hesitation, the commands of the pontiff. For centuries, what of literature there was in Europe, was confined to the above classes of priests; and the superstition as well as ignorance, of the people, rendered them the easy dupes of their spiritual guides. Large revenues in money were raised under various pretences; a great portion of the lands in Europe, became the property of the Church and the estates of the Church were considered sacred; and to withdraw any part of it from the object of its appropriation, was deemed to be the height of impiety. On the pretext that their prayers would avail to redeem a soul from purgatory, the clergy made bargains with the deluded people for the benefit of deceased friends. A given amount of money was paid for the redemption of the soul of a departed relative from punishment; and the sum was always proportioned to the wealth of the family which was a party to the contract. The sale of indulgencies was another productive branch of revenue to the Church; but we shall have occasion to mention this in another place. By these means the Papal Church amassed immense wealth.

One efficient measure to accomplish the ambitious designs of the Roman pontiff, was the claim of infallibility. As the vicegerent of Christ on earth, the Pope claimed the posses-

sion not only of power to rule the Church universal, but also the authority to determine the true meaning of scripture, to decide all controversies, to judge on every doctrinal publication, and to settle all questions of conscience. The people were never to use their own judgement on religion, but implicitly to bow their understandings to the wiser decisions of their spiritual fathers; and though the truth of a position should appear to their minds as clear as the light of the meridian sun, yet if it was pronounced by the infallible judge untrue, they must with heart and soul acquiesce, and sincerely believe as the Church decreed. Having an infallible teacher, the bible was not thought necessary for the laity; and on the plea that they had not judgement to understand its communications, it was withheld from their perusal.

As though all this was not enough for the purposes of delusion, the Papal Church held the doctrine of tradition: that is, they maintained that the apostles of our Lord, from prudential considerations, did not commit to writing, the whole system of divine revelation, but transmitted, by oral tradition, certain principles and rules, which are of equal authority with the written will of God. These traditions were committed, from generation to generation to the safe keeping of ecclesiastics, who in reality composed the Christian Church; and the laity are solemnly bound to receive these from their priest, on the authority of God. From this secret treasury the Papal clergy could draw any order, precept, or rule, calculated to subserve the designs of their ambition, avarice, or sensuality; and no one, on the penalty of his salvation, must question its validity.

Excommunication was used as a powerful instrument to subserve the designs of Papal usurpation. The Pope fulminated the sentence of excommunication against all who manifested a spirit of opposition to the requisitions of the Church, or made the slightest resistance to the execution of her decrees. This sentence deprived the excommunicated of every religious privilege, excluded them from a participation in the rights of humanity, and made them forlorn outcasts in society. Their bodies were denied Christian burial; and the ignorant and superstitious wretches died in the full expectation that the Papal sentence would be ratified at the tribunal of heaven, and would prove the seal of their eternal perdition. Sometimes a whole king-

dom was excommunicated for an act of insubordination in its sovereign. This sentence closed every Church in the realm, and suspended the exercise of every Christian office through the whole community. It was received by the mass of the people with astonishment and terror, like that which would be experienced, should the sun cease to shine, and the elements of heaven be made the ministers of divine vengeance on a guilty nation.

To complete this system of spiritual imposition and tyranny, the Papal Church established the court of inquisition, to guard against the very semblance of opposition to its authority. On mere suspicion of the want of allegiance to their sovereignty, the officers of this court, in the midnight hour, and with the silence of the thief, invaded the mansion of the citizen, and dragged the master of the household from the bosom of his family to a dungeon, where he was not confronted with his accuser, where no charge was laid against him nor measures of defence allowed; but where he was tortured and forced to a confession against himself; and where, when policy dictated, he expired on the wheel. Still his dearest relative dared not inquire for the cause of his arrest; nor his best friend dispute the story of his sufferings and destruction. Is it then possible that the liberal institutions of the gospel should be thus perverted to purposes of domination and cruelty? Is it possible that the religion of love and benevolence should be made the instrument to accomplish the designs of human pride and ambition? While we review the terrific features of Papal tyranny, our blood becomes cold, and our minds, in detestation, recoil from the contemplation of the hateful picture.

But this complicated apparatus of means, this immense engine of power, fully answered the intended design of aggrandizement.—The minister of the lowly Jesus assumed the loftiest titles, and decorated himself with a triple crown. He appeared in all the magnificence, and was surrounded with all the splendor and pomp of royalty. Encircled by his cardinals, the Pope issued decrees which not only regulated the religious affairs of every Church, but also affected the most important interests of the civil governments of Europe, and not unfrequently disposed of the thrones of kings and emperors. Here he arrogated the attributes of Divinity, and presumed to exercise the prerogative of God.

He exalted himself above all that is called God: he as God, sat in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This must suffice to show the rise and extent of the usurpation of the Bishop of Rome. The corruptions and abuses of the Papal Hierarchy will be more fully considered on a future occasion.

Dr. Bancroft.

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST ?

(Continued from 63d page.)

I now propose to enter, a little more particularly than we are accustomed to do, into the meaning of some of the most common terms and expressions by which, in the New Testament, religion and the subjects of religion are described. I shall endeavour to range the terms to be noticed under several heads; such principally as the following, viz. the appellations given to our religion—the benefit which it was designed to communicate—the mode and means of obtaining this benefit and the method of God's bestowing it.

1. First the appellations given to Christianity. These are such as *covenant*, *testament*, *kingdom of God*, *mystery*.

Covenant and *testament* are a translation of the same word, which signified originally an arrangement. God's dealings with men have in the scriptures taken a form, or an arrangement. There is something fixed and established, a plan by which God promises certain blessings on certain conditions. This is God's covenant.

Testament conveys to us the idea of an arrangement, to take place after the death of him who makes it; and is with additional propriety applied to Christianity, because it was left as a plan or direction to be executed or followed after the death of its Founder.—A testament cannot take effect till the death of the testator; and therefore, for this reason among others, the death of Christ is represented as confirming and establishing his religion. Thus we hear of the blood of the Covenant or Testament; and our Saviour says to his disciples, this cup is the New Testament in my blood; i. e. this cup represents my blood, in other words my death, by which my religion is sealed, my work is consummated. And what I have taught, commanded and promised may be regarded by you as my testament.

The phrase *kingdom of God* conveys to many minds, I believe, the idea of some out-

ward establishment of God's dominion; or at least of something that is extraneous to piety itself. But says our Saviour, 'the kingdom of God is within you'; and Paul teaches us that the kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In other words, the kingdom of God is the prevalence of goodness. In the mind that is imbued with true religion, God reigns; it is subject to his will. Christianity in its holy influences on the heart, is therefore very naturally denominated the kingdom or reign of God.

Again. The Christian religion is called a *mystery*, and by common, though it must be allowed careless readers, this word is understood to import something inscrutable, incomprehensible. I say careless readers, because out of the twenty seven times in which this word is used in the New Testament, it evidently means in every instance (but one and that doubtful*) not something unintelligible, but something revealed. In two instances only it relates to something future, which was already revealed, but which might be considered as in some obscurity since it was yet to be accomplished. The principal of these is in the 2d Epistle to the Thessalonians, ii. 7. where Paul is speaking of the great anti-christian apostacy, which had already begun to manifest itself. And he does it in these terms; "And now we know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth, i. e. hindereth, will let until he be taken out of the way, then shall that Wicked be revealed."

In two instances only, the word *mystery* means something obscurely revealed, shadowed forth by allegory and metaphor. These are, the mystery of the seven stars in Rev. (i. e. what was illustrated or represented by the seven stars) and the passage in Ephesians, where Paul says "this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The connexion between our Lord and his followers, he had illustrated from our natural affections; and as they did but illustrate it, as they failed fully to exhibit it, he still calls it a mystery.

* The case excepted is in the 13th Cor. 'though I understand all mysteries.' Here it is probable enough, as the supposition gives intensity to the comparison which the Apostle uses, that the word *mystery* means something beyond the reach of human powers to comprehend.

There is one passage indeed I Cor. xiv. 2. where the word relates to things not understood, but this was because they were spoken in an unknown tongue, not because they were unintelligible.

In all other instances, mystery, in the New Testament, is something not obscurely shadowed forth, much less unintelligible, but clearly manifested. As in the following language. "I shew you a mystery we shall not all sleep, &c. Having made known unto us the mystery of his will. When ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. I would not that ye should be ignorant of this mystery." And again in that very passage commonly thought to be a striking declaration of the mysteriousness of the gospel, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "great is the mystery of godliness" we are explicitly told what this great mystery is. God was manifest in the flesh, or (as it should be rendered by the correction of better manuscripts) he, who was manifest in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, &c. Here the mystery spoken of is manifest and declared, not unintelligible.

I have not gone through this examination, for the sake of shewing that there are no mysteries in religion. On the contrary there are mysteries in every thing. But it would be very strange indeed, if they should especially denominate and characterize a system which was expressly given as a REVELATION. This would be confounding all language, calling darkness light and light darkness.

D.

(To be Continued)

"It often happens that men are prone to neglect those parts of the covenant of salvation, on which no clouds and darkness rest, and pay an exclusive attention to the most obscure and mysterious passages in the epistles of St. Paul; to dive into the profoundest depths of theology, and incautiously to pass over the practical commands of christianity, such as our Saviour's excellent sermon on the mount, the writings of the evangelists, &c. forgetting that secret things belong to God; that if some things in St. Paul's writings were hard to be understood in the age in which they were written, as St. Peter confesses, they must certainly be more obscure after the lapse of so many centuries, than they were in the

period when the facts to which they alluded were recent, when the dissensions they were intended to pacify, the heresies they were to combat, and the sophisms which they were to refute, were matters of public notoriety, and topics of common conversation. There are passages in the scriptures which are clear, as they are useful, and which relate to those duties that are of universal obligation. To attend to these is our first interest. At the great day, it will not be inquired how logically any man has reasoned, but only how virtuously he has acted; and to have possessed that love to God, the first fruits of which were benevolence and good will to men, will be then of more importance to us, than to have acquired all knowledge and to have understood all mysteries.

Forgetting this plain and obvious truth, how often has the fair face of christianity been disfigured, and that religion which is designed to be a *rule of life, and a system of consolation*, been converted into a chaos of mystery, in which the wise and the foolish are alike bewildered—doctrines received as divine in proportion to their obscurity, and important in proportion to their impracticability—reason, that light of heaven shining into the mind of man, to enable him to distinguish truth from error, and what is practical, from what is speculative, rejected as depraved, and the importance of doctrines magnified in proportion as they are unintelligible and irrational. In such a case, religion is not clothed in less awful terror, than profound mystery. God is represented as being angry with men as soon as they are born into the world, only because they are born; and Jesus Christ as trying to appease his wrath, and to calm his resentments. Hence it is obvious to remark how these persons whose education, or constitutional gloom of mind have led them to embrace such a system, are often the prey of religious terrors, and corroding anxieties. And hence they pay less homage in their devotions to the Father than to the Son, and often address their petitions to the last, without any reference to the first. They characterize the Father by the inflexible severity of justice, and to the Son they assign exclusively the winning attribute of mercy. Whereas it ought to be remembered, that the love of the Father was prior to the mercy of the Saviour. *For God so loved the world, says the apostle, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Acts iii. 19 — *Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

THERE is a notion of repentance, which is frequently among the thoughts of every one, and which is received with little variety by all. When we apply this notion to ourselves, in the course of our conduct, we mean no more, than that we are sensible of having done wrong in some particular instance, that our practice has been faulty, that we feel some present regret, arising from the consideration of our neglect or violation of duty. But, in such cases, our sense of being blame-worthy, and its consequent sorrow, are in themselves temporary and accidental, they may or may not have an influence on our principles and characters. And these temporary affections are but a small part of the operations by virtue of which our sins are to be blotted out. Our divine instructor does not promise to blot out our sins merely on condition that we acknowledge and regret them. The sense of misconduct and the feelings of sorrow must be followed by something more permanent than convictions, confessions, and regrets.—When these have penetrated in, and given a new face to the character without, when an effectual change, so far as is necessary, of disposition and conduct, is produced, then and then only are our sins blotted out.

I intend to speak *first* of some popular views of repentance, which I think unreasonable and unscriptural. *Secondly* to consider the doctrine as it is taught in the scriptures. *Thirdly* I will speak of the causes of repentance, and *lastly* of its importance.

The notion of occasional repentance has been, I think, a fruitful source of the false views which have been suffered to disfigure and obscure the christian doctrine to which the text refers. For instance, the doctrine has been made to require no more than the conviction of past sin, attended with deep and sincere feelings of sorrow and self-reproach.

This has been called repentance. By this exercise our past sins have been supposed to be atoned for. Because we know that our conduct was wrong, because we regret it, and make a resolution not to repeat it, we have repented. Such repentance many experience under present affliction, or the apprehension of great and imminent danger either apparent or real. But if this were all, repentance would be of no moral use. We might repent and re-repent, believe and tremble,

and be unregenerate still. This idea of repentance does not include the work of reformation and improvement. Reformation and improvement are progressive, the work of time. Conviction and sorrow may come in a moment, but they alone will not make us better. We know too that the appearances of repentance may be exhibited, without any clear convictions and suitable feelings in the penitent, such convictions and feeling as correspond to the nature and extent of his guilt.

If that repentance, which is produced by the prospect of dissolution near at hand, is accompanied by any radical change, improvement in the character, it must be out of the common course. But that it is not always accompanied by such a change we know too well. How many instances there have been of those, who in extreme sickness have felt all the terrors of the death bed, being restored to health and entering again upon their vicious courses.

Feelings and expressions of sorrow for sin, then, are no tests of reforming repentance. And those who shew them in abundance, instead of doing any thing to amend, are often found "in penance planning sins anew."

A man is stung with the reproach of general misconduct, a conduct which he knows to be bad, but of which he has been too heedless to know in what its reproach consists.—He is humbled under a sense of present disgrace, but which he rather seeks to conceal than remove—he has no other repugnance to the sins to which he has been devoted, than a feeling of the unhappiness they have caused him—he has no clear or constant views of that becoming behavior, the neglect of which has made him miserable—he has no taste or affection for the virtues opposed to his besetting sins; his subsequent conduct therefore discovers no decided or availing endeavors by which his life is made better. If on the contrary, we are thoroughly convinced of past errors and vices, if we fully understand the nature and foresee the consequences of our misconduct—are justly sensible of the merits the ways and advantages of well-doing, and would seek to reform, we shall spend little time in unavailing tears and fruitless self-reproaches, we shall not stop short at the threshold; the sorrow of sinning and the reproach of doing ill we shall indeed feel and acknowledge, but we shall make no claims to virtue till we have the joy of good intentions, and the self-approbation of doing well.
F.